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**SCAG APPLAUDS REGIONAL PLANNING EMPHASIS IN
FEDERAL TRANSPORTATION BILL**

SCAG Regional Planning Initiatives Bolstered By Five-Year Transportation Bill

Los Angeles – The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) applauded a number of the provisions and projects funded by the five-year federal transportation reauthorization bill (referred to as SAFETEA-LU) signed by President Bush today. SCAG was particularly pleased with the measure’s new emphasis on the importance of regional planning, one of the bill’s key objectives.

The new bill altered the funding category, previously referred to as “Projects of National Significance” to “Projects of National and Regional Significance,” demonstrating an increased recognition by our nation’s leaders on the concept of regional planning. Congestion does not stop at city or county boundaries, and as the recent growth in cargo-related activity has demonstrated, traffic generated in one community can ultimately have major effects in neighboring areas.

In a further sign of the importance given to regional planning, Congress mandated a 25% funding increase for metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs). This will add several million dollars for regional planning activities throughout the state and will help address the increasingly complex planning needs of Southern California.

SCAG, the nation’s largest MPO, coordinated several delegations of local elected officials to Sacramento and Washington, D.C. over the past few years as the transportation bill was being formulated. For the first time, Southern California transportation leaders jointly advocated for a consensus package of regional priorities. In pursuing the Southern California Consensus Program, SCAG was joined by the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority; Orange County Transportation Authority; Ventura County Transportation Commission; Riverside County Transportation Commission; San Bernardino Associated Governments; Imperial Valley Associated Governments; and Southern California Regional Rail Authority.

The projects advocated by the regional delegation addressed the dramatic population growth projected in Southern California. The delegation emphasized that the increasing bottleneck at the Long Beach and Los Angeles ports not only impacts the economy and quality of

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life of our own residents, but those of the nation as well. Southern California imports more than 40 percent of the nation's consumer goods, but it does not have the capacity to accommodate the rate of increased growth. Without investments into our regional infrastructure, the nation's trade economy would suffer significantly.

The Southern California Consensus Program projects receiving funding include:

- Alameda Corridor East grade separation improvements: \$178,640,000
- Desmond Bridge expansion: \$100,000,000
- I-405 high-occupancy vehicle lane (HOV) improvements: \$130,000,000
- Eastside Light Rail: \$399,520,000
- Los Angeles Metro Gold Line extension: \$15,040,000
- SR-78/Brawley Bypass: \$7,600,000

“The funding allocations included in this bill are a true testament to the efforts that Southern California leaders made in their unified approach on regional priorities,” stated Toni Young, Port Hueneme City Councilmember and SCAG President. “Having consensus on our region's most important priorities substantially impacted Congress' decision to provide critical transportation funding to Southern California. This is not pork, it is infrastructure.”

The \$1.9 billion allocated under the bill's “Projects of National and Regional Significance” will help pay for major transportation infrastructure projects to relieve air pollution, such as the Alameda Corridor East, freeway improvements and goods movement projects that are critical in meeting our local and national needs. While the funding allocated is not enough to pay for the completion of these vital projects, it does provide the means to move them forward.

“It took the perseverance of SCAG's leaders to help convince legislators of the importance of regional planning throughout the United States,” stated Mark Pisano, Executive Director of SCAG. “Freight and goods movement infrastructure has now been given the priority it deserves, which in turn will bolster the nation's economy in the years to come.”